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APPLICANT NAME: Jo-Ann M. Geuss *et al.*

TITLE: TRANSFORMING A PORTION OF A DATABASE INTO A CUSTOM  
SPREADSHEET

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**INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS MACHINES CORPORATION**

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# TRANSFORMING A PORTION OF A DATABASE INTO A CUSTOM SPREADSHEET

## Background of the Invention

### 1. Technical Field

The present invention relates to a method and computer system for transforming a portion  
5 of a database into a custom spreadsheet.

### 2. Related Art

Within LOTUS DOMINO<sup>®</sup>, there is a native capability to export a view of a database to a  
spreadsheet, such that every column and row of the view goes to a corresponding column and  
row of the spreadsheet. There is a need for a capability to export a view of a database to a  
spreadsheet in a manner that is more flexible than that provided by the aforementioned native  
capability within LOTUS DOMINO<sup>®</sup>.

## Summary of the Invention

The present invention provides a method for generating a custom spreadsheet, said  
method comprising transforming a view of a database into the custom spreadsheet, wherein the  
15 transforming includes determining selected from the group consisting of determining whether to  
omit in the custom spreadsheet a column that is in the view, determining whether to add to the  
custom spreadsheet a column that is not in the view, and combinations thereof.

The present invention provides a computer system for generating a custom spreadsheet,

said computer system comprising software adapted to transform a view of a database into the custom spreadsheet, wherein to transform includes to determine selected from the group consisting of to determine whether to omit in the custom spreadsheet a column that is in the view, to determine whether to add to the custom spreadsheet a column that is not in the view, and combinations thereof.

The present invention provides a capability to export a portion (i.e., a view) of a database to a spreadsheet in a manner that is more flexible than that provided by a native capability within LOTUS DOMINO®.

### Brief Description of the Drawings

FIG. 1 depicts a view into a database structure, said view disclosing a list of documents, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 2 depicts a document listed in the view of FIG. 1, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 3 depicts a first custom spreadsheet generated from the view of FIG. 1, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 4 depicts a second custom spreadsheet that differs from the first custom spreadsheet of FIG. 3 in that the first custom spreadsheet expresses amounts in units of dollars while the second custom spreadsheet expresses amounts in units of hours of work, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 5 is a flow chart for software that generates a custom spreadsheet, in accordance

with embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 6 is a tabulation of rule sets that contain rules for generating a custom spreadsheet, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 7 depicts a computer system for generating a custom spreadsheet, in accordance with  
5      embodiments of the present invention.

### **Detailed Description of the Invention**

FIG. 1 depicts a view into a database structure, said view disclosing a list of documents, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. A “database structure” is defined herein as an organized group of databases, spreadsheets, tables, files, etc. capable of storing data in tabular form. As an example, the database structure may comprise, *inter alia*, LOTUS  
10      NOTES® databases. The database structure exists with an operating system environment such as, *inter alia*, a LOTUS DOMINO® software environment. A “view into a database structure” is known in the art as a “virtual table” in which data of the database structure is represented in the form of a table, but does not actually exist as a table of the database structure. The documents  
15      listed in the view of FIG. 1 are of a type known as “Account Group” documents, and each row in the view of FIG. 1 that has a value in the “Account Group ID” column denotes a distinct document. Thus each document in the view of Table 1 is characterized by a unique combination of values of the first four columns: “Year”, “Month”, “Service Description”, and Account Group ID”. The remaining columns (“Plan”, “Actual”, “Delta”, “%Delta”, “YTD Plan”, “YTD Actual”,  
20      and “YTD Delta”, ...) for each row include data that is in the document associated with the row.

A "document" is a file, table, etc. that includes some or all of the data in said row in the view of FIG. 1, as well as other data associated with the document. As an example, the document defined by "Year"=2001, "Month"=April, "Service Description"=LB LONG, and "Account Group ID"=34AE2 includes the following document data: "Plan"=1,005; "Actual"=1,452; "Delta"=447; "%Delta"=44.48; "YTD Plan"=2,548; "YTD Actual"=3,129; "YTD Delta"=581, .... The actual spreadsheet portion of the view of FIG. 1 is the columns of "Plan", "Actual", "%Delta", "YTD Plan", "YTD Actual", "YTD Delta", ..., in all rows that correspond to a document. Definitionally, "Plan" denotes an amount of dollars planned to be spent during the "Month", "Actual" denotes the number of dollars actually spent during the "Month", "Delta"="Actual"- "Plan", "%Delta"=100x("Delta"/"Plan") where division by zero results in 0.00, "YTD Plan" denotes an amount of dollars planned to be spent during the "Year" (from the beginning of the "Year" through the "Month"), "YTD Actual" denotes the number of dollars actually spent during the "Year" (from the beginning of the "Year" through the "Month"), and "YTD Delta"="YTD Actual"- "YTD Plan". The symbol  $\nabla$  next to a value in a given column signifies that the value in the given column pertains to all subsequent rows until another value in the given column appears. The symbol  $\triangleright$  next to a value in a given column signifies that the value in the given column pertains to only the row that actually includes the value in the given column.

FIG. 2 depicts the document listed in the view of FIG. 1 characterized by "Year"=2001, "Month"=April, "Service Description"=LB LONG, and "Account Group ID"=34AE2, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. The document of FIG. 2 lists some or all

of the data in the view of FIG. 1 for the document as well as other data associated with the document (e.g., "Account Group Description"=Logistics, "Percent of Plan (\$)"=144.5, etc.).

FIG. 3 depicts a custom spreadsheet (also called herein a "report") generated from the view of FIG. 1, in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. The custom spreadsheet of FIG. 3 may include some or all of the spreadsheet columns of the view of FIG. 1, and may also include one or more columns which are not spreadsheet columns of the view of FIG. 1. For example, the custom spreadsheet of FIG. 3 does not include the "%Delta" column of the view of FIG. 1. As another example, the custom spreadsheet of FIG. 3 includes a "Pct of Plan %" column which does not exist as a spreadsheet column of the view of FIG. 1. The custom spreadsheet of FIG. 3 may also include calculated information, such as a calculated function of one or more columns that is in the view or in the custom spreadsheet. For example, the "Pct of Plan %" in FIG. 3 is calculated as  $100 * ("Curr Month Actual" / "Curr Month Plan")$ , which shows a value of "100+" if "Curr Month Plan" is zero. The custom spreadsheet of FIG. 3 has special underlining of column names and of totals and subtotals.

The custom spreadsheet of FIG. 3 may be configured in various ways, in accordance with rule sets. A "rule set" is defined as a set of one or more rules. In light of the numerous possible types of spreadsheets in many different applications, the rule sets are generally depend on a "report identifier" that denotes a spreadsheet type. The spreadsheet type of FIG. 3 is an "Account Group" spreadsheet type.

FIG. 6 shows rule set types that may be applicable to the custom spreadsheet of FIG. 3. Column Selection Rules control which columns not in the view of FIG. 1 are added to the custom

spreadsheet, and also which columns in the view of FIG. 1 are omitted in the custom spreadsheet.

Such Column Selection Rules are highly dependent on the report identifier and may also vary in a case-dependent manner for different custom spreadsheets having the same report identifier.

Range Formatting Rules control the appearance of text in the custom spreadsheet cells that do

not have column titles, and include such items as font, color, data type (e.g., text, integer, floating point, justification (e.g., left, right, center). Column Title Rules control column title labeling and column title formatting (e.g., font, color, justification). Report Header Rules control report

header content and report header formatting (e.g., font, color, justification). Examples of header content in the custom spreadsheet of FIG. 3 include: "DCS North Solution Team", "IBM Global

Services", "BLM Server", etc. Report Footer Rules control report footer content and report footer formatting (e.g., font, color, justification). FIG. 3 does not show report footer content, because the bottom portion of FIG. 3 is truncated, so that footers are not visible in FIG. 3.

Totaling Rules control totaling and subtotaling content, as well as totaling and subtotaling formatting. Translation Rules control translating or converting data from one format to another

such as, *inter alia*, converting decimal values to percentages, rounding values, converting text (e.g. "January" becomes "Jan." or "1"), converting time values to include AM or PM, etc.

Calculation Rules control data calculations such as, *inter alia*, the calculation of the added "Pct of Plan %" column added to the custom spreadsheet, described *supra*. Report Naming And

Placement Rules control report naming and report location (e.g., server, web, directory path,

etc.). For example, the report in FIG. 3 is named "Report of Account Group 34AE2 For April 2001." Document Collection rules control a method of obtaining, and a criteria for selecting, a

subset of database documents to export.

Noting that the custom spreadsheet may comprise one or more “sheets” (also called “pages”), the Sheet Rules in FIG. 6 control naming of sheets and formatting of sheets. For example, FIGS. 3 and 4 are each sheets of a single custom spreadsheet, with the sheets of FIGS.

5 3 and 4 being respectively named as “(\$ Sheet)” and “(H Sheet)”. FIG. 4 depicts a second custom spreadsheet that differs from the first custom spreadsheet of FIG. 3 in that the first custom spreadsheet expresses amounts in units of dollars (\$) whereas the second custom spreadsheet expresses amounts in units of hours (H) of work. Aside from the distinction between dollars (\$) and hours (H), the rule sets that pertain to the sheets of the custom spreadsheet of FIGS. 3 and 4 comprise one or more rule sets that are common to the sheets of FIGS. 3 and 4. Such common rule sets are designated as “integrative sets” that cut across the sheets of FIGS. 3 and 4. Generally, a multi-sheet spreadsheet comprises a plurality of sheets, and the multi-sheet spreadsheet may have at least one integrative rule set that cuts across at least two sheets of the plurality of sheets.



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The document of FIG. 2 was used, in combination with the view of FIG. 1,  
to generate the custom spreadsheets of FIGS. 3 and 4. Nonetheless, a document may be used to  
generate the custom spreadsheet but is not required to be so used, since the information required  
to be in the custom spreadsheet is typically available from other sources such as a view of the  
5 database, the database directly, and/or user input. Similarly, a view may be used to generate the  
custom spreadsheet but is not required to be so used, since the information required to be in the  
custom spreadsheet is typically available from other sources such as a document, the database  
directly, and/or user input. Regardless of whether views and/or documents are used to generate  
the custom spreadsheet, all of the prior discussion of rule sets, rules, software modules, etc, apply  
to the generation of the custom spreadsheet in accordance with the present invention.

Generally, the present invention transforms a portion of a database into a custom  
spreadsheet. Said portion may alternatively be any portion of the database. For example, said  
portion may be a view such as has been described herein in FIGS. 1-4. As another example, said  
portion may be a table, a portion of a table, a collection of tables, etc. of the database.

15 The particular column variables and associated names, their arrangement, data values,  
text, etc., appearing in FIGS. 1-4 are merely illustrative. The custom spreadsheets (and  
associated views, documents, tables, etc.) of the present invention include any number and  
arrangement of columns and rows, column names, data vales, text, etc.

FIG. 5 is a flow chart for software that transforms a custom spreadsheet **20** from a portion  
20 (e.g., a view) **12** of a database (e.g., a LOTUS DOMINO® database), in accordance with  
embodiments of the present invention. The software includes a control program (also called a

“main report processor”) 10 that manages the process of generating the custom spreadsheet 20.

The control program 10 may execute normally in the foreground, or may execute in the background as an “agent.” An “agent” is a computer executable program or software that functions as a background process within the operating system environment. The agent can function concurrent with, and independent of, other software execution that is occurring within the operating system environment.

The control program 10 determines: whether to omit in the custom spreadsheet 20 a column that is in the portion 12, whether to add to the custom spreadsheet 20 a column that is not in the portion 12, or combinations thereof, such as by, *inter alia*, using the Column Selection Rules described *supra* in conjunction with FIG. 6. The control program 10 invokes N software modules ( $N \geq 1$ ), identified as  $M_1, M_2, \dots, M_N$ , to “retrieve” N corresponding rule sets, denoted as  $R_1, R_2, \dots, R_N$ , needed for performing N corresponding functions  $F_1, F_2, \dots, F_N$ . A “software module” is any distinct software code that has some level of separation from the control program 10. The module may be in the form of object code or in source form such that the module must be interpreted in order to be executed. Examples of a software modules includes a script (e.g., a LOTUS® script), a stand-alone program, a subroutine (or subprogram or function) of the control program 10, etc. The N modules may be stored or distributed anywhere within the computer system in which the generation of the custom spreadsheet 20 occurs, such as in a module library stored on a magnetic disk. To illustrate the preceding notation for with reference to FIG. 6,  $R_1$  may represent Range Formatting Rules retrieved by module  $M_1$  that is named RangeFormat, wherein  $R_1$  is needed for performing the function  $F_1$  of formatting for font, color, data type

justification, etc. Similarly with reference to FIG. 6,  $R_2$  may represent Report Header Rules,  $R_3$  may represent Calculation rules, etc.

To "retrieve" a rule set means to obtain the rule set in any manner, such as by extracting the rule set from a file or table, generating the rule set from an algorithm, etc. The functions  $F_1, F_2, \dots, F_N$  may be performed by a spreadsheet generator **14**, which directly implements the rules of the rule sets  $R_1, R_2, \dots, R_N$ , respectively. The spreadsheet generator **14** may include, *inter alia*, commercial software such as LOTUS® software that supports generation of LOTUS 1-2-3® spreadsheets, wherein the custom spreadsheet **20** is a LOTUS 1-2-3® spreadsheet. Although not shown in FIG. 5, the spreadsheet generator **14** may alternatively exist as code within the control program **10**. The modules  $M_1, M_2, \dots, M_N$  may communicate the retrieved  $N$  rule sets  $R_1, R_2, \dots, R_N$  directly to the spreadsheet generator **14** via data paths **31, 32, ..., 33**, or indirectly to the spreadsheet generator **14** via data paths **41, 42, ..., 43** to the control program **10** followed by communication of the  $N$  rule sets from the control program **10** to the spreadsheet generator **14** via the data path **22**. Alternatively, the functions  $F_1, F_2, \dots, F_N$  based on the rules  $R_1, R_2, \dots, R_N$  could be performed by the modules  $M_1, M_2, \dots, M_N$ , or by the control program **10**, instead of by the spreadsheet generator **14**.

The preceding discussion of the flow chart of FIG. 5 disclosed various logical schemes for transforming the custom spreadsheet **20** from the portion **12**. The scope of the present invention includes any variation of the aforementioned logical schemes that would be known or obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art.

FIG. 7 depicts a computer system **90** for generating the custom spreadsheet **20** (see FIG.

5), in accordance with embodiments of the present invention. The computer system **90** comprises a processor **91**, an input device **92** coupled to the processor **91**, an output device **93** coupled to the processor **91**, and memory devices **94** and **95** each coupled to the processor **91**. The input device **92** may be, *inter alia*, a keyboard, a mouse, etc. The output device **93** may be, *inter alia*, a printer, a plotter, a computer screen, a magnetic tape, a removable hard disk, a floppy disk, etc. The memory devices **94** and **95** may be, *inter alia*, a hard disk, a dynamic random access memory (DRAM), a read-only memory (ROM), etc. The memory device **95**, which is a computer usable medium, stores the control program **10**, the spreadsheet generator **14**, and the N modules **99**. The memory device **94**, which is a computer usable medium, stores the database **97** from which the portion **12** (see FIG. 5) is derived. The processor **91** executes the control program **10**, the modules **99**, and the spreadsheet generator **14**. The memory device **94** includes input data **96**. The input data **96** includes input required by the control program **10**, the modules **99**, and the spreadsheet generator **14**. The output device **93** displays output, such as the portion **12** (see FIG. 5), the custom spreadsheet **20** (see FIG. 5), etc.

While FIG. 7 shows the computer system **90** as a particular configuration of hardware and software, any configuration of hardware and software, as would be known to a person of ordinary skill in the art, may be utilized for the purposes stated *supra* in conjunction with the particular computer system **90** of FIG. 7. For example, the memory devices **94** and **95** may be portions of a single memory device rather than separate memory devices. As another example, the control program **10**, the modules **99**, the spreadsheet generator **14**, and the database **97** may be distributed in the memory devices **94** and **95** in a different manner than is shown in FIG. 7.

While embodiments of the present invention have been described herein for purposes of illustration, many modifications and changes will become apparent to those skilled in the art. Accordingly, the appended claims are intended to encompass all such modifications and changes as fall within the true spirit and scope of this invention.

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